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ABSTRACT

The goal of this booklet is to provide stakeholders in South Africa's early childhood development (ECD) system with information about the government's Reception Year Pilot Project and to help them understand ECD as part of a wider education and training policy. The booklet is divided into two sections. Section 1 describes the Reception Year Pilot Project and discusses how young children, the people who care for them, and organizations working in ECD can become involved in the project. (The "reception year" is defined as the first year of formal schooling.) Issues addressed in the first section include implementation of the reception year and distribution of project funds in five areas: (1) subsidies for community-based ECD services; (2) contracts for ECD training organizations; (3) accreditation of ECD practitioners working in the services that are involved in the project; (4) development of the interim policy for ECD into a final policy; and (5) a publicity and information campaign. Section 2 provides a bigger picture of policy development for national education and training, introducing the National Qualifications Framework and explaining how ECD fits into that framework. Information in both sections is presented as a discussion between a person from the National Educare Forum (producers of the booklet) and a group of parents and ECD practitioners. (EV)

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Early Childhood Development Policy for Beginners

PS 027818

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- The Reception Year Pilot Project for ECD
- ECD and the National Qualifications Framework

BOOKLET 1

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What This Booklet "ECD Policy for Beginners" is about

Our aim in producing **ECD POLICY FOR BEGINNERS** is to give you information about the government's Reception Year Pilot Project and to help you to understand ECD as a part of wider education and training policy.

The booklet is divided into two sections:

1. In **Section One** we will describe the **Reception Year Pilot Project** and we will show you how young children, the people who care for them, and organisations working in ECD, can become involved in the project.

2. In **Section Two** we will give you a bigger picture of policy development for national education and training. We will introduce you to the **National Qualifications Framework** and show you how ECD fits into that Framework.

ECD POLICY FOR BEGINNERS is written mainly for the people and organisations that are stakeholders in ECD. Stakeholders are those who have an active interest in this work. The stakeholders that we are mainly concerned to reach with this booklet are parents, community based organisations, ECD practitioners, and non-governmental organisations working in this field.

ECD POLICY FOR BEGINNERS has been produced by the **National Educare Forum (NEF)**. The NEF was set up in 1992 to channel funds and encourage the development of ECD work. This happened as a result of the Independent Development Trust allocating R70 million to address the ECD needs of the disadvantaged communities in South Africa.

"The mission of the NEF as a conduit and development agency is to promote sustainable development of all children from birth to the age of about nine in South Africa, with a special focus on those who have been disadvantaged by the legacy of Apartheid. This will be done through appropriate research and educare community programmes to develop the full potential of South Africa's children."

In **ECD POLICY FOR BEGINNERS** we have made up a discussion between a person from NEF and a group of parents and ECD practitioners. We hope that this is a useful way of sharing important information with you.

Big things are happening in early childhood development (ECD)

For the first time in our history the government is developing policies for the care and education of the youngest of our young. The National Department of Education is working with provincial education departments and many educational organisations and institutions to shape new policies for ECD. These new beginnings for our children are the foundation for lifelong learning.

The Minister of National Education, Sibusiso Bhengu, has said some important things about ECD over the last two years.....

* In February 1995:

"The care and development of young children must be the foundation of social relations and the starting point of human resource development strategies from community to national levels. The values and principles guiding this process are: access, redress, equity, quality and democratic governance." (White Paper on Education and Training)

* In August 1995:

* *"For the first time in our history we are setting up a state authority to take charge of educare. This is called the Directorate for Early Childhood Development and Junior Primary Education Programmes. It will have its own staff and its own funds."*

* In July 1996:

"We can now announce our Interim Policy for Early Childhood Development. It provides an interim curriculum for the care and education of all children from birth to nine years old. This gives us a single direction for the healthy development of all our young. It also lays down interim guidelines for the accreditation of ECD practitioners. This means we can start to assess what their skills are, what qualifications they should have, and what training they need. We call this policy "interim" because it is something to work with until a final policy is made."

What is Early Childhood Development (ECD)

There may be many of you who are teachers, trainers, caregivers or parents who have not heard the term **Early Childhood Development**. It is the new way of approaching and talking about educare. **Early Childhood Development** is an approach to the education, care, and development of our children that forms part of a much wider education and training policy that our new democratic government is shaping.

Educare is something that most of us are familiar with from the past. It involved the care and education of our children before they started formal schooling at the age of about 6. **Early Childhood Development** is about the same care and education. It is also about developing lifeskills in our children from birth. But it now also includes the first years of primary school. Right up to what we all know as grade three or standard one is included in the concept of **Early Childhood Development**. These early years at primary school used to be called the junior primary phase. Now we call them the Foundation Phase of formal school.

So when we talk now about **Early Childhood Development** we are talking about the care, education and development of all children in South Africa from their first years at home up to their first years in a formal primary school. This covers children up to the age of about nine years old.

In the past when we spoke about educare, we called the adults who were involved in educare work either teachers or caregivers. Now we have the term **Early Childhood Development Practitioners** to describe the people who work in Early Childhood Development.

In this booklet we will use the abbreviation **ECD** for Early Childhood Development.

PART ONE

The Reception Year Pilot Project

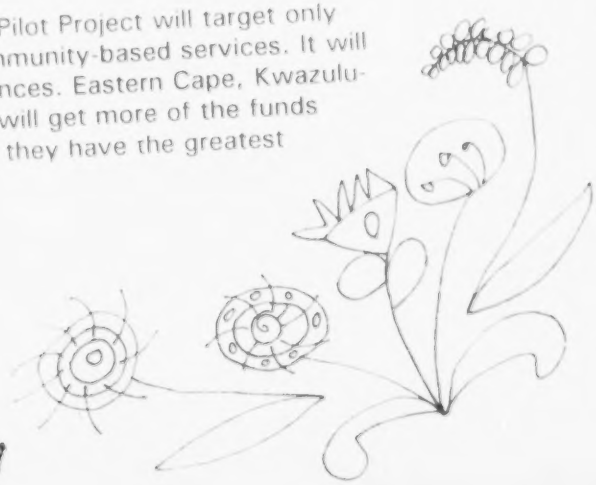
I would like to welcome you, the stakeholders in ECD work, to this discussion. I will begin with an introduction to the Reception Year Pilot Project and then I would like us to be guided by your questions.

Today we have a new democratic government and a new constitution. For the first time in our history we are building a single education and training system for all South Africans. The Government of National Unity we elected in 1994 committed itself to developing ECD programmes for young children. One of the first steps that it took to show this committment was to announce that it would establish a Reception Year as the first year of compulsory schooling.

The Reception Year is being recognised as the first year of formal school. It will be the first year of the Foundation Phase of the four-year Junior Primary Programme. So the Reception Year will be for children who are about five or six years old.

The Reception Year Pilot Project is the first step towards putting this new first year of compulsory schooling into place. It is a national project that is going to be managed by Ms Salama Hendricks, the Director of ECD and Junior Primary Education Programmes. This Directorate falls under the Department of National Education.

Because of limited funds, the Pilot Project will target only the poorest of the poor in community-based services. It will be carried out in all nine provinces. Eastern Cape, Kwazulu-Natal, and Northern Province will get more of the funds than other provinces because they have the greatest poverty.

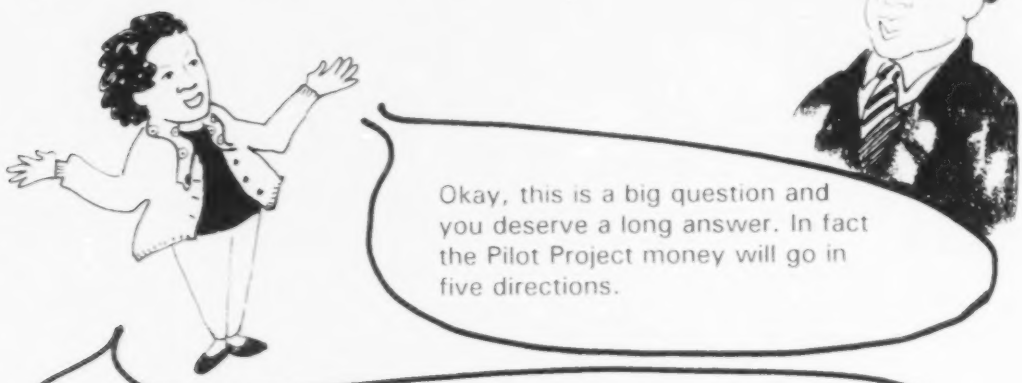


The Reception Year Pilot Project is a three year project. The Department of National Education will only provide funds for the first year. The Provincial Education Departments will then have to provide the funds for the following two years. The National Department of Education says it is ready to start the project this year, but it is really up to each Provincial Department to say exactly when it is ready. I am sure that the Reception Year Pilot Project will get into full swing at the beginning of 1997.

Okay, now we have some idea of what is going on, but let's get down to more detail. We need to hear more about how this project aims to implement the Reception Year.....For example, how can we suddenly set up a whole new year of primary schooling?

No, at this stage we must not see the Reception Year as a formal year of instruction at a school. During the Pilot Project the Reception Year can take place in a community-based centre. It can also happen in the home. We will use the project to prepare for the future when the Reception Year will be introduced as the first year of the Junior Primary Programme. In fact the subsidies from the Pilot Project are only going to go to children who are outside formal schools.

What do you mean when you say the funds will go to children? Where exactly will the money go and what will it be used for in this Reception Year Pilot Project?



Okay, this is a big question and you deserve a long answer. In fact the Pilot Project money will go in five directions.

First I will just list these five directions and then I will go into each one in detail:

1. Per capita subsidies for children in community-based ECD services

2. Contracts for ECD training organisations

3. Accreditation of ECD practitioners working in services that are involved in the project

4. Developing the present Interim Policy for ECD into a final policy through research

5. A publicity and information campaign

1. Subsidies for community-based Early Childhood Development services

Pilot project funds are intended to assist ECD services that are based in the community. The services that will benefit are those in impoverished areas, especially in rural, semi-urban and squatter communities. ECD services that are based in schools and in some educare projects will not get subsidies from the Pilot Project because they are already funded from Provincial Education budgets.

A community-based service will receive a subsidy for each five and six year-old in the centre. We are still waiting to hear exactly how much the subsidy will be. We will be very strict to make sure that ECD services do not throw out younger children in order to attract children who will bring in subsidies. In any case, the idea is that all the children in a service should benefit from the subsidies.

Community-based ECD services will have to apply for the subsidy. To get the subsidy the service must have the following things:

- A financial system to account for money. This must include a bank account for the centre, at least two signatories on its cheques, and a book-keeping system that can be understood by parents and the community.

- Not more than 40 children for every adult providing care.
- The service must be at least three years old.
- The families should contribute to the running of the service by paying fees or by helping the people providing care and education.
- At least one of the people providing care in the service must be willing to be trained in order to meet a qualified standard.

As well as this, the government will look at the following things that are important for an ECD service:

* Sanitation, Clean water, Nutrition, Safety
* An environment and a situation that makes it possible for children to learn.
* Access to people who can read and write and who can work with numbers.
* Proof that the children in the service come from different age groups.

Any service which cannot meet all or some of these requirements can be helped to draw up a business plan. They can then apply for funds to make improvements to their service. To do this they would have to get labour and support from the community they serve.

2. Contracts for Early Childhood Development training organisations

The second direction that funds will take will be for training ECD practitioners. In the first year of the project the Department of National Education will give funds to the Provincial Education Departments to provide training to the services that are getting subsidies through the Pilot Project. In the second and third years of the Project the provinces will have to fund this themselves. Non-government organisations (NGO's) that give training to ECD practitioners, can tender to the provincial departments for training contracts. This means that they must put in an application to be considered for a contract.

Quite correct. The main requirement is that any NGO must show that it is able to do the kind of training that is needed and that it has skills in the field of ECD. It must also show that its courses follow the curriculum and accreditation guidelines laid down by the Interim Policy. Even with this, NGO's will also have to:

- Demonstrate their expertise and skill in ECD.
- Show that they have ways of assessing the competence of the people who they train. This must include internal and external evaluations.
- Show their understanding and their vision of the Interim Policy for ECD and for the National Qualifications Framework.
- Show that their training staff are able to teach and assess the students being trained and that they can do this in the situation in which the students will work.

- Show a clear committment to build the capacity of community-based services to carry out ECD work.
- Show that they have well established financial systems and at least two years of written financial reports.
- Show that they are cost-effective in their training work.

I understand most of what you are saying but there are some things that you have not explained - like the interim curriculum for ECD and the National Qualifications Framework. What are these things?

We will get to those but I must first finish telling you about where the Pilot Project funding is going. After that we can look at the interim curriculum. The second part of this booklet is going to give you some information about the National Qualifications Framework, so hang on. Let's now look at the third direction for Pilot Project funds.

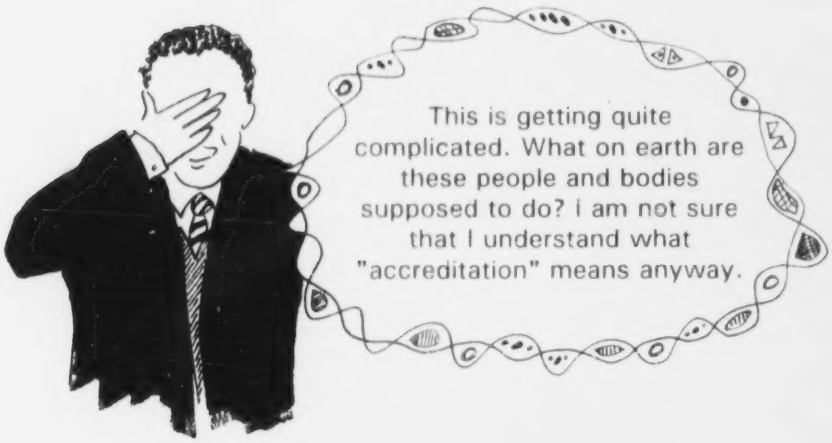
3. Accreditation of ECD practitioners working in the services that are involved in the project

The Department of National Education is going to set up an Interim Accreditation Body, or IAB, consisting of eight people. Those people will be chosen from applicants by an independent committee. People who want to apply to be on the IAB must:

- Say clearly why they should be chosen to sit on the IAB.
- Present their vision of how the ECD interim guidelines for accreditation should be developed.
- Have had 5 year's experience in ECD work.

The Interim Accreditation Body will be assisted by a Technical Secretariat. The Secretariat will be made up of organisations and not individual people. The organisations will be chosen through a process of public tender. For an organisation to be selected it will have to:

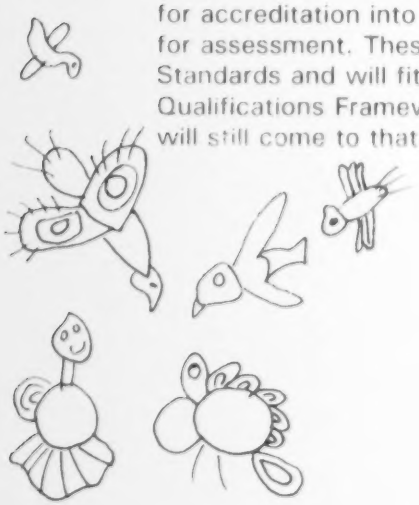
- Show that it has skill and experience in assessment work.
- Show that it has a clear understanding of the National Qualifications Framework and in outcome-based education for educators.
- Have amongst its staff people who have at least two years of relevant South African experience. These people must be used in the Secretariat work.
- Present a detailed technical explanation of how it will carry out its duties for the Secretariat.
- Show that it has accounting systems to monitor IAB expenditure.
- Show that it can work in a cost-effective way.


This is getting quite complicated. What on earth are these people and bodies supposed to do? I am not sure that I understand what "accreditation" means anyway.

Fair enough. You see the IAB Technical Secretariat will give temporary accreditation to the ECD practitioners who are working in services that are receiving subsidies from the Pilot Project. In the Interim Policy for ECD the government has laid down guidelines for us to use in judging the skills and abilities of ECD practitioners. If an ECD practitioner meets certain standards then she or he is credited for that - its like getting a qualification - that is what accreditation means - getting a credit.

Many of the ECD practitioners involved in the project will need to go for more training in order to meet all the accreditation guidelines. They will do this during the three years of the Pilot Project and the training will be carried out by the NGO's that we spoke about earlier. Even ECD practitioners based in formal schools who are not involved in the Pilot Project can volunteer to take part in this interim accreditation and training process.

You see, by doing this with the assistance of the IAB Secretariat, the ability of each provincial education department and of NGO's in assessing the standards of ECD practitioners will be strengthened. We will also develop new assessment methods and in the end we will turn the interim guidelines for accreditation into permanent standards for assessment. These will be called Unit Standards and will fit into the National Qualifications Framework. Don't worry we will still come to that.

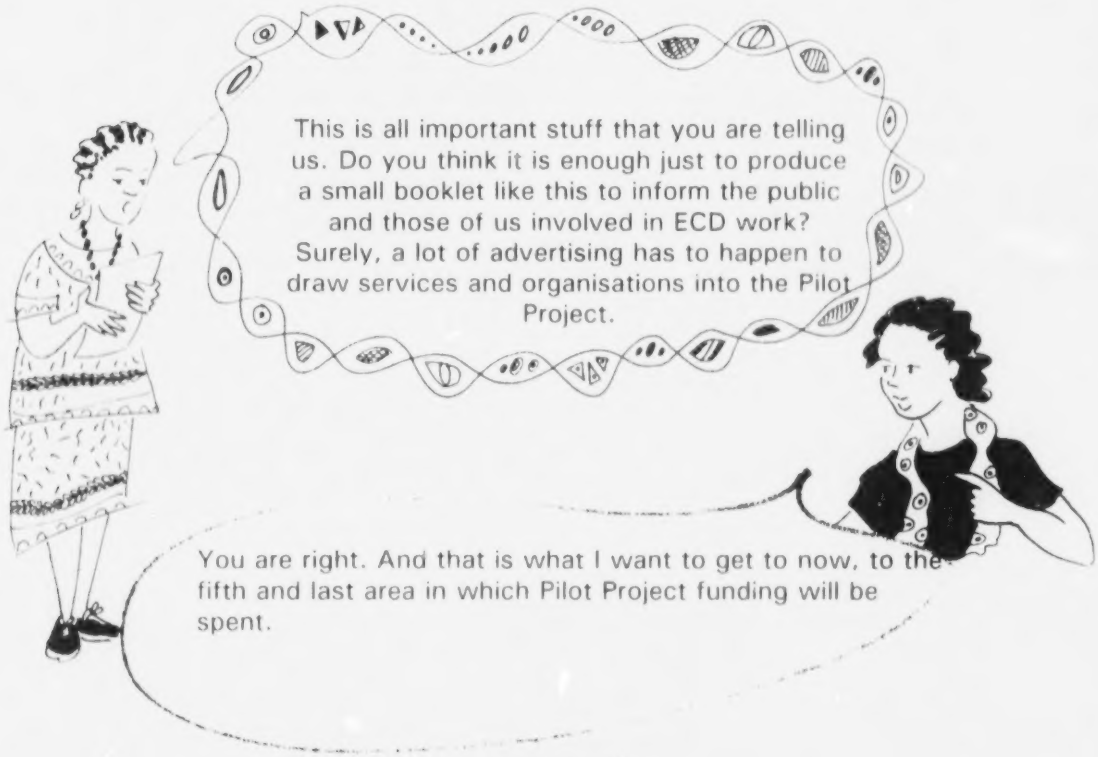


4. Developing the Interim Policy for Early Childhood Development into a final policy

Obviously this Pilot Project has to lead somewhere in the long term. One of its aims is to help us to produce a final policy framework for ECD during the project's three-year period. That will mean a clear and final curriculum for children and an established accreditation system for ECD practitioners.

One of the important tasks of those involved in the Pilot Project is to work out a long-term subsidy system that can cover formal as well as non-formal ECD services.

The Department of National Education will also contract a research team through public tender to assist in developing this long term policy. Applications to do the research must come from organisations and the requirements will be similar to what is required of organisations that want to be considered for the IAB Technical Secretariat.


This is all important stuff that you are telling us. Do you think it is enough just to produce a small booklet like this to inform the public and those of us involved in ECD work? Surely, a lot of advertising has to happen to draw services and organisations into the Pilot Project.
You are right. And that is what I want to get to now, to the fifth and last area in which Pilot Project funding will be spent.

5. A publicity and information campaign

What we are doing now from the NEF is to publicise information about the Reception Year Pilot Project. But the government has a much bigger publicity campaign in mind. Money has been put aside to select a professional Public Relations firm through public tender. Its job will be to inform those who work in ECD and who could get involved in the Pilot Project.

The main targets for this information campaign will be:

- National and Provincial Departments of Education
- Community-based ECD services
- NGO's that do training for ECD practitioners
- Primary schools

Maybe you can tell us what you think this campaign needs to advertise?

I think it would need to advertise four things:

* The subsidies that are being offered to community-based ECD services.
* How NGO's can apply for ECD training contracts.
* The nomination process for selection to the Interim Accreditation Body and its Technical Secretariat.
* The interim guidelines for accreditation.

Well, those are the five directions for the Pilot Project funds. I think that we should have a break before we go into Part Two of this booklet. Before we break however, do you have any more questions about the Reception Year project?

Yes. You said earlier that you would tell us something about the curriculum for this new Reception Year. I know that the whole ECD curriculum is only temporary, or interim, but it would be useful to hear what these policy-makers are thinking.

Okay. As you know a curriculum is a set of courses or programmes or activities or results that are laid out for a person to get through or achieve. A curriculum will say what must be learnt and how it must be taught. We will explain in the second part of the booklet how we are moving away from the old style of curriculum to something called an outcomes-based curriculum for all our education and training.

There is no special curriculum for the Reception Year. In fact the present Interim Curriculum for ECD covers the whole period up to the end of Grade 3. We say that what happens in the Reception Year must follow what has come before and must lay the basis for what follows in formal schooling. The formal school programme for Grades 1 to 3 should not be offered to children in the Reception Year. In the Reception Year we think that ECD practitioners must help to develop a wide range of lifeskills. Let me give you a list:

* physical development
* emotional development
* intellectual and perceptual development
* communication and language skills
* development of numeracy and mathematical skills
* development of cultural, artistic and craft skills
* development of the inquiry skills used in the physical and natural sciences
* development of an understanding of technology
* development of an understanding of economic activities
* spiritual, moral and ethical development
* development of human and social awareness

I also have a last question. I've got a picture of what this project is but I would like to know where it comes from. Is there a special group of people in the Department of Education working on ECD policies?

Yes there is. In August 1995 a Directorate for ECD and Junior Primary Education was established within the National Department of Education. One of the first tasks of the Director, Salama Hendricks, was to develop a strategy for the Directorate.

She produced a document in September 1995 called A Strategy for Early Childhood Development. This strategy document gives clear recognition to the wide range of non-formal experiences, activities, and organisations that have worked in educare work in the past. It says that the government's task is to build on this past experience and to link it to new policy development. National and provincial government resources must be used to put the provision of ECD onto a much larger scale than we have known. The Strategy also gives priority to the development of the Reception Year.

But probably the most important development out of the Strategy for Early Childhood Development was the establishment of the Coordinating Committee for Early Childhood Development, called the CCECD. The CCECD was given the task of assisting the Directorate

in drawing up an interim policy for ECD. That Interim policy was announced by Minister Bengu in July 1996. As I have already explained, the most important aspects of the interim policy are the interim curriculum for children, and the formulation of interim standards which can be used for assessing the abilities, skills and training needs of ECD practitioners.

It is also important to note that the CCECD is at present only an interim body, just like the ECD policy. When we have a final ECD policy then the CCECD will become a statutory body that will advise the minister on ECD issues.

PART TWO
early childhood development and the national qualifications framework

In this second part of **ECD POLICY FOR BEGINNERS** we will step outside of the Reception Year project to look at the larger picture into which it fits. It is important to do this so that you, as stakeholders in ECD, can have the confidence to participate in discussions of policy. We need to share information and ideas so that we can encourage democratic governance in policy-making.

In a small booklet like this we can only offer you an outline of how education and training policy is developing. In particular we want to introduce you to some new concepts that are being used to shape new policy.

I will start by throwing these concepts at you. You will see that they are quite a mouthful. But stick with us. We will explain them and string them together.

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the national qualifications framework – a frame and a tool for policy development

The **NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (NQF)** is the frame into which the government is trying to fit and organise all education and training. If you think of how apartheid divided, scattered, neglected, and ignored education and training, then you can see that it is a big job to put everything into one system.

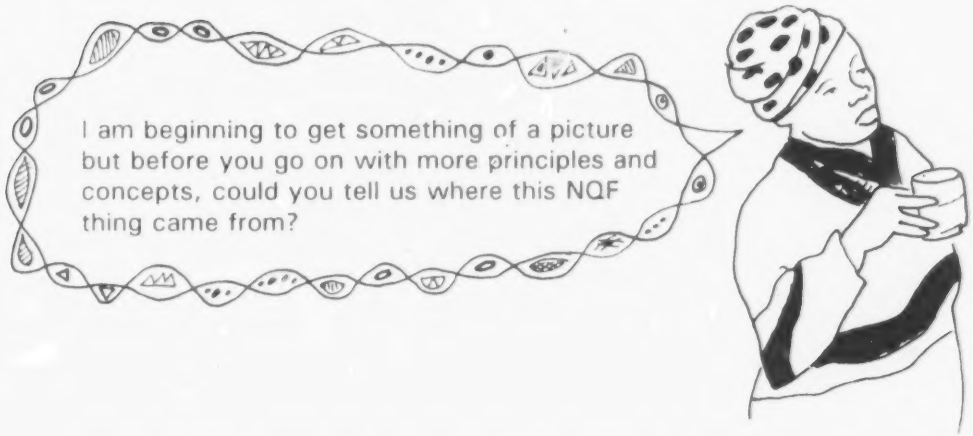
The work that is being done to develop the NQF is being guided by twelve educational principles. We will not look at all of them in this booklet, but only at a few that are most important for ECD practitioners.

One of the key principles of the NQF is the **INTEGRATION OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING**. In the past, formal academic learning was kept in one place and non-formal practical training happened somewhere else. This division has wasted resources and forced people into rigid categories that have not encouraged their full development. For many people working in the ECD sector their non-formal training has hardly had any recognition. Integration through the NQF will allow people to move much more freely within a single educational system.

The aim of the NQF is to put all education and training into one framework. ECD, high school, Adult Basic Education, and any direction of tertiary education and training are all linked together in one system. All learning standards and qualifications will be registered and nationally recognised so almost every person can come in and find her or his place.

Of course, it is not just important that people can find their place. The single national system of education and training with recognised standards will also encourage progression. **PROGRESSION** allows a person to keep moving through different levels of education and training. This is why we say that the NQF encourages **LIFELONG LEARNING**.

And in such a system where all standards are included and linked you can easily move sideways in your work and training. For example if you are a health worker and you want to become an ECD practitioner the NQF can assess your ability and recognise your existing skills and qualifications and help you move to a new field. You don't just have to start at the beginning again like we did in the past. The NQF uses the concept of **PORTABILITY** to describe how you can carry your qualifications around from one area of work or study to another.


I am beginning to get something of a picture but before you go on with more principles and concepts, could you tell us where this NQF thing came from?

The idea for a National Qualifications Framework came from a National Training Policy workshop held by the ANC and COSATU in June 1993. It is an approach to education and training that has been adopted in Canada and Australia. That first idea has been taken a long way through discussions among various interest groups. A major step was taken in 1995 when Parliament established the **SOUTH AFRICAN QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY (SAQA)** to develop and implement the NQF. SAQA is guided by two main aims: to build an education and training system that establishes equality for all South Africans and that improves the quality of our education and training. The SAQA board has thirty members and one of them represents ECD.

Notes

I think it would also be useful at this point for me to show you a diagram of what the NQF looks like. I want to do this so that you can see where you might fit in. It is important that you understand that this framework is still being worked on so what I am showing you is not final.

If you look at the diagram you will see that the NQF is divided into three **BANDS**: the General Education and Training Band, the Further Education and Training Band, and the Higher Education and Training Band. Then each band is divided into **LEVELS** so that there are eight levels across all three bands. NQF level one makes up the whole of the General Education and Training band.

Firstly, let us place ECD inside this framework. ECD is at the beginning of the General Education and Training band, which is also level one. It includes Preschool and the Foundation Phase of Primary School which goes up to Grade 3 or Standard 1. So that is where the children fit in.

Secondly, let us look at a few ECD practitioners to see where they fit into the new NQF levels.

(a) A man with a pre-primary teaching diploma.....NQF level 5

(b) A woman with a four-year degree.....NQF level 6

(c) A practitioner with a national educare certificate (N2) from a technical college.....NQF level 3

(d) It has not yet been decided where on the NQF levels to place a person trained by an NGO. This debate will continue for some time. You should feel free to participate in the debate and make your voice heard.

NQF BANDS	NQF LEVELS	EXISTING FORMAL EDUCATION SYSTEM		ADULT EDUCATION
HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING BAND	8. DOCTORATE / FURTHER RESEARCH DEGREES	ADVANCED DEGREES		
	7. HIGHER DEGREES PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS	PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS	HIGHER DEGREES	
	6. FIRST DEGREES / HIGHER DIPLOMAS	HIGHER DIPLOMAS	FIRST DEGREES	
	5. DIPLOMAS / OCCUPATIONAL CERTIFICATES	DIPLOMAS	OCCUPATIONAL CERTIFICATES	N6 N5 N4
FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING BAND	4 SCHOOL / COLLEGE /	SENIOR CERT STANDARD 10	FETC GRADE 12	N3
	3 TRAINING CERTIFICATES	STD 9	GRADE 11	N2
	2 MIX OF UNITS FROM ALL	STD 8	GRADE 10	N1
GENERAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING BAND	SENIOR PHASE	STD 7 STD 6	GETC GRADE 9 GRADE 8	ABET 4
		STD 5 STD 4	GRADE 7 GRADE 6	ABET 3
	1 INTERMEDIATE PHASE	STD 3 STD 2	GRADE 5 GRADE 4	ABET 2
	FOUNDATION PHASE EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT 0-9 YRS (RECEPTION)	STD 1 SUB B SUB A	GRADE 3 GRADE 2 GRADE 1	ABET 1
		PRE PRIMARY	RECEPTION	
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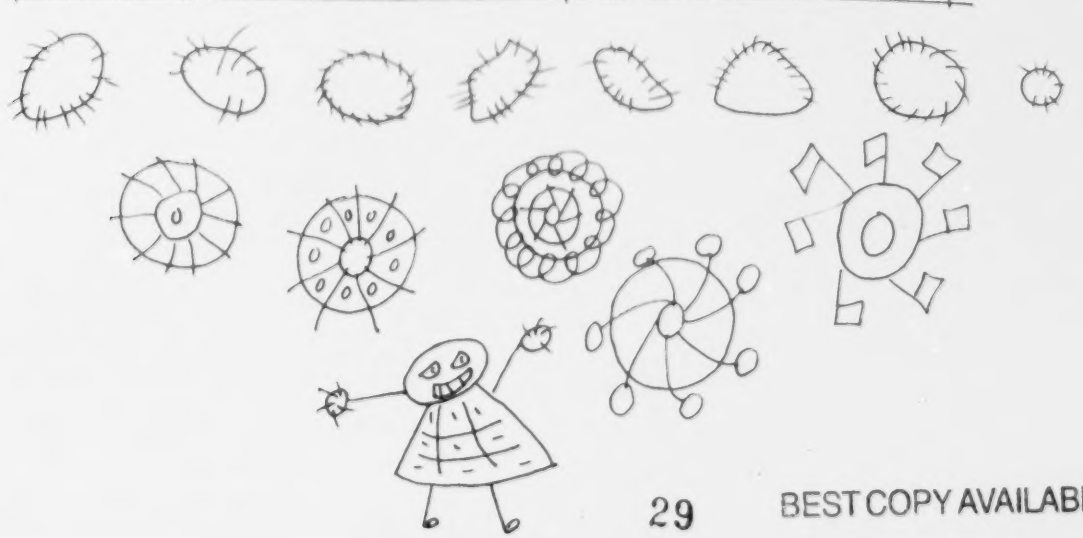

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I understand that SAQA is responsible for setting all the qualifications and standards in the NQF. But how do they decide which qualifications are on the same NQF level?

Okay, let us get back to concepts. In setting out to develop quality and equality in education and training, SAQA and all the role players in education and training have to use the NQF as a tool. The NQF is not just a framework into which things are to be fitted and organised, but it is also a collection of principles and methods that can be used to shape the framework that we want. One very important job is to establish new standards and qualifications. In doing this the NQF is making use of new methods of assessing peoples' skills and abilities. There are two methods that we need to highlight because they are very important for ECD.

Firstly, the NQF is going to shift away from the old style of curriculum. In the past any curriculum said what must be learned, how it must be taught and how much time should be spent learning each section of the subject matter. The NQF is moving away from this emphasis on content or subject matter. It says that what is more important is the outcome or result of learning. What a person understands and how she or he can apply the knowledge learnt is more important than what the person studied to get the skills or how long the person took.

So, according to the NQF, curriculum development will now involve designing programmes of learning that will help a learner achieve certain outcomes that are important for that area of work. SAQA will have to develop standards and qualifications according to an **OUTCOMES-BASED MODEL OF LEARNING**. As long as a person can show that he or she has developed a skill or an ability it does not matter how he or she got there. This will allow learners much more freedom and will help them to take skills from one kind of education or training to another. In this way a health worker can show how her abilities can also be used for ECD. So an outcomes-based standard allows for portability - remember that concept?

Obviously there is a big job to be done to work out what outcomes will be expected at different levels of education and training in the NQF. Standards will be set so that learning outcomes can be assessed. These standards will be set for individual units of learning. When these are worked out they will be called **UNIT STANDARDS**. A unit standard will be like a credit which a person will be given towards a qualification.

Secondly, if people are going to be assessed according to their abilities and not simply according to certain subject matter in a course, then all kinds of informal learning experiences can become recognised. This is called **RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING**. A person can get a credit or even a whole qualification if they can show that they have the capability that is required by the outcome standard. This means that someone who has years of experience but no formal training can have his or her knowledge and skill recognised.

SAQA will also have to decide how many credits and what kind of credits will make up a recognised **NATIONAL QUALIFICATION**. We can say that a qualification is a grouping of unit-standards that measure a person's ability to perform a specific task.

I don't understand how the thirty people who make up the SAQA board are going to do all this work of setting standards and qualifications in the NQF.

Okay, I will give you more detail about SAQA and about the various structures that will implement and manage the NQF under SAQA's authority.

Basically, SAQA will have the following functions:

- to oversee the development of the NQF
- to oversee the implementation of the NQF
- to advise the minister on matters affecting the registration of standards and qualifications, and
- to be responsible for the control of the finances of SAQA

There are a number of structures under the authority of SAQA which will do the work on the ground. Firstly, there are the **NATIONAL STANDARDS BODIES (NSB's)**, the **STANDARDS GENERATING BODIES (SGB's)**, and the **QUALIFICATIONS COUNCILS (QC's)**, which will all be responsible for setting standards. And secondly, there are the **EDUCATION AND TRAINING QUALITY ASSURERS (ETQA's)** which will check and monitor the quality of education and training that is provided against the standards that have been set. Let me give you a bit more detail on these structures:

NSB's

National Standards Bodies will be set up and registered by SAQA. They will represent all national role players and stakeholders. The NSB's will be responsible for establishing education and training standards. Each NSB will have responsibility for a specific field of learning. These fields of learning are still being defined.

SGB's

Standards Generating Bodies will fall under an NSB. An SGB can be made up of any sub group within an NSB. The SGB's are the specialist teams which will write standards for a specific path of learning within a wider field. For example, within the NSB that is responsible for the field of Education and Training Development there could be an SGB for Early Childhood Development. So standards will be proposed by SGB's for specific subjects of study and then established within a wider field by the NSB. Such standards must then be approved and registered by SAQA as unit standards and qualifications.

QC's

You might remember that the NQF consists of three education and training bands. It is being proposed that a Qualifications Council be set up for each of these NQF bands. The job of a QC would be to set the general rules for establishing qualifications within a band. A QC can take proposals for qualifications from any stakeholder and, after consulting the relevant NSB, put forward recommendations to SAQA for registration of a qualification.

ETQA's

Finally, there are the Education and Training Quality Assurers. Their job will be to check and monitor that the education and training that is being provided matches up with the standards that have been set by the NSB's and registered by SAQA. So their role is to check the quality of education and training that is being provided. There are still different ideas about who would be part of an ETQA and what fields ETQA's would take responsibility for.

This is as far as we want to go in this second part of the booklet. I think that we have introduced some important concepts to you regarding the NQF.

Before you put this booklet aside, have a look at the last page. We have there a list of the most important policy questions facing people and organisations working in ECD. These questions are summarised from the Discussion Document released by the Directorate in May 1996.

MAJOR POLICY QUESTIONS FACING THE EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT SECTOR

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1 The ECD sector needs to recommend qualifications which:

* are recognised nationally
* ensure that people are able to develop themselves further
* allow for people to move in the system
* recognise prior learning

2 The ECD sector needs to distinguish clearly between children learners and the people who are teachers and caregivers. There is often confusion when we are discussing curriculum and outcomes. There is a suggestion that teachers and caregivers should be called Early Childhood Development Practitioners (ECDP).

3 The ECD sector must decide on the number of levels in the NQF for ECD practitioner training.

4 The ECD sector must decide whether learning outcomes should be developed for ECD (birth to 9 years old), especially for the years before formal schooling.

5 What phases should the ECD period be divided into?

6 The ECD sector will need to develop unit standards consisting of statements of outcomes and assessment criteria that are specific to ECD. These unit standards will have to be related to the levels on the NQF and to qualifications requirements for ECD practitioners. In order to set these standards, the sector needs to have clearly defined career paths located at the different levels of the NQF.

7 Who are the stakeholders in ECD?

8 How many different levels of qualifications are required for ECD practitioners? How will these correspond with NQF levels?

9 What are the general educational requirements for each level and qualification for ECD? For example are literacy and numeracy necessary?

10 What are the specialisation requirements within the ECD sector? For example, caring for children with special needs.

(Taken from the May 1996 Discussion Document issued by the Directorate for Early Childhood Development and Junior Primary Programmes)

Notes

The information in this booklet was taken from the following sources:

* "Interim Early Childhood Development Policy Document".
The Department of Education. February 1996.
* "The Early Childhood Development Sector and the National Qualifications Framework. A Discussion Document".
The Directorate for Early Childhood Development and Junior Primary Programmes. May 1996.
* "The Reception Year".
An article in the NEF Communicator of July 1996.

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